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ABSTRACT

American policymakers have come to view principals as linchpins in plans for educational change. Findings of a study that examined how the principal's role changes in a school that is engaged in fundamental restructuring are presented in this paper. Data for the longitudinal case study of a suburban-urban school district in the northeastern United States were collected from 1988 to 1993. This paper focuses on the implementation processes of school-based management and shared decision making in two elementary schools. Methodology involved document analysis and interviews with central office administrators, members of the school leadership councils, and the two principals. Findings indicate that structural changes in the school increase the potential for conflict because principals must negotiate higher stakes decisions with parents and staff, yet remain accountable to the central office. For the most part, the principals were unable to successfully adapt to the demands of the district context. Successful leadership in a participative decision-making context requires congruence of personal values with organizational goals, preparation in group process skills, instructional leadership abilities, and clear lines of authority and domains of responsibility. (Contains 31 references.) (LMI)

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From Attila the Hun to Mary had a Little Lamb:

Redefining Principal Roles in Restructured Schools

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> I used to run the school. I was like 'Attila the Hun.' Now I'm more like 'Mary had a little lamb.' I only give information. I try never to direct them [members of the School Leadership Council]. (Jack Cameron, principal, Eastside Elementary School, 9/89)

American policymakers have come to view principals as linchpins in plans for educational change (Barth, 1986; Hallinger, 1992). This was particularly true during the 1980's as state education authorities sought to reform the principalship in an image compatible with the currently popular conception of effective schooling (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy, 1990). In practical terms, this shift in perspective demanded a deemphasis in the principal's role as a manager and greater stress on instructional leadership responsibilities. Training programs began to reorient principal preparation towards the image of the principal as a strong instructional leader (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Wimpelberg, 1990). Yet, with the advent of the 1990's, shifting priorities have already begun to diminish the viability of this image of the principalship in the United States and many other countries (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992).

School restructuring changes the context for school leadership by giving schools greater authority and mandating shared decision-making procedures. It involves a fundamental change in the way the organization goes about its business. As Jick has observed, "Transformational change. . . require[s] a leap of faith for the organization, although it is often initiated when other options appear to have failed. It is typified by a radical reconceptualization of the organization's mission, culture, success factors, form, leadership and the like" (1990, p. 6).

New and still different roles are being envisioned for principals as school restructuring initiatives have taken hold around the country (Murphy, 1990, 1992). Although the managerial and instructional leadership roles of the principal reflect different emphases, they share the

assumption that the principal is the school's central decision-maker. Concern has been expressed over the compatibility of directive principal leadership with conceptions of teacher leadership and professionalism associated with school restructuring. Consequently, principals are being exhorted to become "transformational leaders," facilitators rather than directors of school improvement efforts (Leithwood et al., 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Murphy, 1992; Sashkin, 1988).

Role shifts that require significant change in professional practice do not occur over-night, if at all (Cuban, 1988). To date there is little evidence that the instructional leadership responsibilities conceived for principals during the 1980's have been integrated into practice (Hallinger, 1992; Marsh, 1992). Yet, principals are now being asked to adapt to a new set of role expectations for transformational leadership.

The quote that opens this chapter is indicative of the degree of change principals are experiencing as they struggle to adapt to new organizational realities in restructured schools. Neither the image of "Attila the Hun" nor "Mary had a little lamb" necessarily reflects the type of leadership style needed in restructured schools. For principals, however, the degree of role transformation reflected in such imagery is both poignant and an important signal for policymakers.

In contrast with the abundant prescriptive literature on leadership and school restructuring, empirical reports of how the principal's role changes in schools that undertake fundamental restructuring are scarce. In this chapter, we address the question: "How does the principal's role change in a school that is engaged in fundamental restructuring?" We present findings from a longitudinal study of one school district's attempt to bring about fundamental restructuring through an interrelated set of reforms that include parent choice, school-based management, shared decision-making, and curricular reorganization. The focus of this inquiry

is on how two specific elements of the district's restructuring effort -- shared decision-making and school-based management -- have reshaped the context for school leadership.

We begin by describing briefly the methodology of the study. Next we introduce the school district, focusing on the nature of its structural reorganization and the role expectations that have emerged for principals. This is followed by an exploration of how the district's restructuring has affected the role of principals. This analysis is presented in light of the three leadership roles referred to above: managerial, instructional, transformational.

Methodology

The findings reported in this chapter are drawn from a longitudinal case study of one public school system's attempt to restructure its schools. Data on the district's restructuring were collected over the period from 1988 to 1993. The data presented in this chapter cover the first four years of school-based implementation (i.e., 1989-90 to 1992-93) and focus specifically on the implementation process at two elementary schools.

The data-set explored in this chapter are comprised of informant interviews with school central office staff and from district documents. The interviews, which lasted between 45 minutes and one and one-half hours, were conducted several times a year at each of two school sites. The interviews were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. The findings reported in this paper are drawn from semi-structured and open-ended interviews conducted with the principals of two of the elementary schools, members of the Leadership Councils, and with central office administrators. The interviews focused on the process of implementing the district's multi-faceted reform plan.

The interview transcripts were analyzed in two stages. Initially, the individual interviews were reviewed following procedures outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984) to identify emergent patterns and themes. As the analysis progressed, cross-role comparisons raised

additional issues and dilemmas arising from conflicting perceptions. This led to the second stage: reanalysis of the original documents and comparison with school documents. The longitudinal nature of the study further allowed us to recheck emergent themes with individuals during subsequent interviews.

The Bridgewater School District

Bridgewater, with a population of approximately 50,000 residents, is a small community located in the northeastern region of the United States. Many of its inhabitants commute to work in New York City, thereby providing Bridgewater with suburban-like qualities. Simultaneously, Bridgewater is a business center itself. Over 300,000 employees commute daily to work in the many large corporations that encircle Bridgewater. The school district, therefore, can be viewed as a suburban/urban district.

At the beginning of this study, the Bridgewater school district was comprised of four K-4 elementary schools, one 5-6 intermediate school, one 7-8 middle school, and one 9-12 high school. The schools serve approximately 5,300 multi-ethnic (47% Caucasian, 28% Black, 23% Hispanic, 2% Asian) and socio-economically diverse students, many of whom live in low income housing. Consequently, the district is confronted with several of the challenges of urban schools. However, unlike many urban school systems, this district also possesses an abundance of human and fiscal resources, most of which stem from the large tax base contributed to by those individuals employed in the Bridgewater industries referred to earlier. In addition, this school system has received a significant sum of grant money to support its restructuring endeavors. As a result, the district currently spends in excess of $13,000 per pupil annually.

The District's Restructuring Plan

This school system has sought to restructure the educational process through a systematic, district-wide mandate. This approach differs substantially from the voluntary restructuring piloted in Dade County, FL. This system's experience also is noteworthy because of the breadth of its program of school restructuring which includes four features often discussed in the education reform literature: the decentralization of authority through school-based management; shared decision-making at each school site; a system of controlled parental choice concerning pupil attendance; and curricula organized around distinctive themes reflecting different educational philosophies.

In February, 1988, the Bridgewater Board of Education approved a plan for restructuring the school system that included the above four elements. The primary motivation was the district's commitment to the development of a viable and effective way to attain ethnic balance in its elementary schools. The district's new policy states: "It is the goal of the district to achieve at each elementary school a mix among "Black," "Hispanic," and "Other" students that is within +/- 5 percentage points of the district average for each of these groups in each of the grade levels" (Bridgewater School District, 1991a).

The other elements in the plan -- school-based management, shared decision-making, thematic curricula -- were piggy-backed onto the new ethnic balance policy. These reforms were conceived as ways of revitalizing the school district and bringing about fundamental change in the process and focus of educational decisions. The superintendent and Board believed that this change in the racial composition of schools had to be accompanied by the development of teaching methods and curricula appropriate to the needs of a changing and increasingly heterogeneous student population.

While the racial balance policy and controlled choice plan do not comprise the focus of this chapter, it should be noted that the district has succeeded in achieving and sustaining

racial/ethnic balance in its schools through this reform. The above-stated goal has been met annually at all of the district's elementary schools during each of the subsequent four years of implementation. At the same time, over 90% of the parents are receiving their first choice of school for their child to attend.

Following the Board's approval of the multi-faceted plan to restructure the Bridgewater school system, a large representative district-wide committee was established in order to design a viable mechanism for decentralizing decision-making to the building level (i.e., school-based management), and to develop a credible and effective process for shared decision-making at each elementary site.

The first task has been extremely difficult. In fact, four years into the implementation process, staff members are still trying to delineate clearly which decisions are in the domain of the schools and which ones are to be retained centrally. In contrast, the district has made more substantial progress in achieving the second goal: the design and implementation of a procedure for shared decision-making at the building level. Following two years of planning, the Board of Education formally passed a new policy which established School Leadership Councils (SLC's) at each elementary site. Several provisions of this policy are salient to our discussion of how restructuring has affected the roles of school principals.

The SLC's are comprised of ten people (principal, 4 teachers, 4 parents, one nonteaching staff member) and have the option of increasing membership up to 15 people. Except for the principal, all members are elected by their respective constituencies. There must be an equal number of parents and staff on the Council. The chair of the Council is elected by the members. To date, all of the Leadership Councils in our study have been chaired by teachers.

Decisions on the SLC's are to be made by consensus whenever possible, or at least by a 75% majority vote of the membership. The principal may veto a decision, but that veto may be

overridden by a 75% vote of the membership. Meetings are public, with agendas prepared and distributed prior to the meetings. Meeting times for the Council are staggered so that no particular constituency is consistently inconvenienced more than others.

The Councils were formed at the end of the 1988-89 school year. The district provided two days of orientation and training to the SLC's in June, 1989 and additional training sporadically since that time. To date, the Councils have been functioning for approximately four years.

The School Contexts

Westside Elementary School is a K-4 school that serves a multi-ethnic population of 480 students. A fifth grade will be incorporated beginning with the 1993-94 school year. As a neighborhood school, over the past ten years it had increasingly drawn from Hispanic families. Its ethnic distribution is currently 15.6% Hispanic, 61.0% Other (Anglo and Asian), and 23.4% Black. The staff of almost 40 teachers has been very stable. Tom Morrow, who is serving his fifth year as principal, has a strong human relations orientation to school leadership. Consequently, he has viewed the district restructuring as an opportunity for substantial improvement in the school and has made only minor stylistic adjustments in his leadership and decision-making styles.

Eastside, which serves 470 students, is also completing its conversion to a K-5 school. The distribution of students is 18.7% Hispanic, 58.8% Other, and 22.5% Black. The socioeconomic distribution ranges from low SES to high SES. The staff of about 35 teachers has also remained stable over the years. Most have been at Eastside for more than ten years, and almost all are tenured. Jack Cameron, the principal during the two years of planning and the initial year of implementation, served as Eastside's principal for 13 years. He was influential in the school district as a negotiator of the principals' bargaining unit and in the state administrators' association where he had served as president. He took great pride in his school as it existed

during his tenure and was concerned about maintaining established standards of excellence as the restructuring proceeded. As a directive leader, he felt that the restructuring required a substantial change in his leadership style. In fact, the new role requirements were so troublesome to him that he decided to retire at the end of the first year of implementation.

His successor, Peter O'Hara, had served as an elementary school principal for several years in a nearby city. Many of his perceptions were colored by his prior experience in this urban environment. Although his former school did not have anywhere near the resources available at Eastside, he was proud of having had a hand in turning the school around. By his own attribution, his success in the city was due in part to the extensive involvement of his teachers in school-wide educational decisions. This was a major factor that led to his selection as the new principal at Eastside.

Shared Decision-Making and the Principal's Role

In this section, we elaborate on the impact of the changing context for school leadership created by the district's policy reforms and the responses of the three principals (i.e., two at Eastside and one at Westside). We focus specifically on ways in which the role of the principal changes in a school that has established a formal mechanism of shared governance. We organize our presentation of the data around the roles of middle manager, instructional leader, and transformational leader (Goldring, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood et al., 1992; Murphy, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992).

Before describing these roles of the principals, it is important to note the more general role ambiguity faced by the principals. When formal roles are ambiguous, participants will be "inclined to accept decisionmaking roles that conform to familiar patterns" (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990, p. 308). As the following quotes indicate this is a persisting concern in the district.

> One of the big issues is that the role of the principal has to be clearly defined, and we are working on that. It will be by a city-wide definition, but . . . [t]here are things I have to do spontaneously as a building administrator. (Jack Cameron, principal; January, 1989)

> The superintendent needs to start to give us more clarity as to what [decision-making authority] they are going to release to us and what we are responsible for. Right now there are a lot of grey areas that we're not really in tune with. (Tom Morrow, principal; February, 1990)

> I think that if we don't do it [define roles] soon they'll burn themselves out in frustration, and we'll lose the momentum. The level of frustration varies from place to place, but it's relatively high [throughout the schools]. People are uncomfortable in settings where they don't feel the roles are defined clearly. (Assistant Superintendent; January, 1991)

In response to this persisting need for role clarification, the superintendent developed An Interim Report on the Delineation of Roles and Responsibilities Within the Bridgewater Public Schools in late 1991. An excerpt from the document reads:

> In essence, the responsibility of each Leadership Council will be to determine how resources will be allocated and how programs will be designed to achieve the student performance outcomes that have been established district-wide. In other words, schools will have the discretion to organize staff, curriculum and

other resources in ways that seem most likely to lead to the successful attainment of the desired student outcomes.

The vehicle for articulating these is the School Plan, a document prepared (or revised) annually by the Leadership Council. At this point, however, it is not yet possible for schools to assume such an open-ended level of discretion. There are still a variety of state mandates we must follow, district initiated programs in place with staff members assigned to them, and local Board policies that govern a variety of instructional and curriculum matters. (1991b, pp. 7-8)

As far as the role of the principal is concerned, the position paper further states:

The principal will continue to carry out a variety of program development and staff leadership functions. . . Developing the vision, goals, and plans for the school. . . , supervise and evaluate all building personnel. . . , facilitate a work climate that is conducive to learning. . . , work collaboratively with the Leadership Council Chair. . . , and oversee accountability systems set up by the school. . . The principal remains the administrative head of the building. (1991b, pp.15-16).

This job description incorporates all of the traditional roles of the principalship and adds others, albeit in rather vague terms (e.g., working collaborative with the Leadership Council Chair). There is little here that informs the principal how to lead in a shared governance setting. The paper explicitly recognizes and endorses the developmental nature of role definition by noting that, "the relationship between the principal and the Leadership Council will have to be developed in the context of each school" (Bridgewater School District, 1991b, p. 15).

Even with publication of the policy paper, this role ambiguity persists. In the words of one of the principals:

> While I'm probably a little clearer in my role as a principal or building administrator, I don't think the parent members or teacher members are at all clear what their responsibility is. . . . I think what has happened is . . . five years later, [we're still] developing roles and responsibilities and relationships. That should not be occurring five years after the inception. We should have a clearer idea of who's doing what, when, and where. It's no clearer than it was when it [position paper] was first written. People still don't know what a Leadership Council can do, what the relationships are. (O'Hara, April, 1993)

When reminded of the district's assumption that defining roles is not a static process, O'Hara retorted:

> People assumed that it [position paper] was going to move from the conceptual to the actual implementation stage, and it really has not. I mean you don't want your roles to be limited by definition. On the other hand, you have to have some core duties and responsibilities that you can build on or interpret. (April, 1993)

Unlike prescribed changes in principal role that result from shifts in the normative environment of schools (e.g., movement for instructional leadership), this district's reforms are essentially structural in nature. Although the responsibility for various decision domains is evolving, the procedures for school-level decision-making are clearly spelled out for principals. Yet, despite the seemingly clear set of district decision-making structures and procedures, the principals continue to operate under considerable ambiguity five years into the implementation process. In the following section, we begin to explore how they have responded to this ambiguity in terms of allocation of time and attention to three possible roles.

The Principal as Middle Manager

The predominant role enacted by American principals from the 1920s until the 1960s was one of administrative manager. During this period, there were occasional calls for principals to return to their roots as classroom teachers. For the most part, however, a nationwide trend towards school consolidation, the profession's emulation of corporate management, and the political nature of public educational institutions led the majority of principals to foreswear the instructional arena as a domain of primary concern (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 1992). In addition, as Cuban (1988) has observed, the managerial role of the principal is a function of the structural configuration of schools.

> Positioned between their superiors who want orders followed and teachers who do the actual work in the classrooms, principals are driven by imperatives over which they have little control. Their responsibility to act exceeds their authority to command; their loyalties are dual: to their school and to headquarters; the professional and political expectations for what should occur in the school conflict; they are maintainers of stability and agents of change. In short embedded within the principalship is genetic material, to extend the metaphor, that shapes to a large degree (but not totally) what principals do. (Cuban, 1988, p. 61)

If this is an accurate depiction of the principalship, what effect does restructuring have on this managerial imperative? Under the shared decision-making policies in Bridgewater, the principal's authority to command is further reduced, even as the *school's* responsibility to act is heightened. Moreover, the primary source of normative expectations shifts from the central office to the school under site-based management.

As noted above, none of the traditional managerial responsibilities of principals have been reduced with the acquisition of leadership responsibilities associated with the district's

restructuring. In fact, the principals identified numerous areas in which their managerial responsibilities had been enlarged. For example, managing public relations has taken on increased salience since the schools began to compete for students under the controlled parent choice provisions of the restructuring initiative (Hallinger & Hausman, 1992). This means that principals must develop the equivalent of marketing plans, hold more frequent open-school nights for parents, be more creative in finding ways to reach parents outside their neighborhoods, and lead larger numbers of parents for school tours.

Under school-based management, the principal remains responsible for facility management. However, there is a clear expectation that others (i.e., parents, staff and teachers) will be formally involved in the decision-making process, which entails a greater time commitment than would have been the case in the past. To the dismay of the principals, implementation of the district restructuring coincided with a major renovation of the elementary schools. This led more than one principal to refer to himself as a "part-time architect." Jack Cameron observed

> I have had to work very closely with the architect and with a group of parents, teachers, and civil service employees to direct the addition of a new building, the conversion of classrooms, and things of that nature. So that is another role I think that's taken a great deal of my time. (Jack Cameron, September, 1989)

Other traditional managerial roles remain equally salient in the minds of the principals. This is true with respect to tasks such as personnel selection, school-community relations, and program evaluation. Thus, we infer that restructuring has not resulted in a diminution of managerial or bureaucratic responsibilities for the principals. If anything, elements of the district's reorganization have added new managerial and bureaucratic tasks. This finding is consistent with others who have noted additive role responsibilities of principals in

restructuring schools (Bredeson, 1989). Moreover, the district's mandated decision-making processes require an increased commitment of time as they carry out both traditional and new tasks. The principals consistently point to the demands on their time as well as that of staff and parents as the single most difficult aspect of implementing the shared governance reforms.

Shared-decision-making and other elements of the restructuring initiative have accentuated the tensions that normally accompany the role of middle manager. Principals are sandwiched between localizing pressures exerted by school-based management and centralizing forces exerted by external mandates and the reluctance of central office personnel to relinquish their authority. The principals must be responsive to parents and staff, while simultaneously staying within centrally imposed guidelines. The fact that these guidelines are often ambiguous seems to exacerbate this tension.

This is most acute when we examine the way in which staff have dealt with the issue of school accountability. Under school-based management, decision-making authority and accountability shift to the school site. Because of the dual reforms in Bridgewater (i.e., school-based management and shared decision-making), this means the School Leadership Council becomes the locus of educational decision-making and accountability. Unanswered, however, is the question of who is accountable for decisions reached by group consensus.

Based on four years of implementation experience, the superintendent's own thinking has evolved. "The Board talks about how it's going to make the councils more accountable, and I say, 'how do you make a council accountable? What's the leverage there?' (April, 1993). He further noted that council members do not have the clout to force the rest of the staff to implement their decisions. Therefore, it would be unjust to hold them accountable as a group even if it were possible. This reflects the significant gap between structural reforms as conceived on paper and the dilemmas faced in implementation.

The principal is still the administrative head of the building. Despite the intent of the structural reorganization, "traditional" organizational imperatives continue to shape others' expectations for managerial accountability. This places the principal in a delicate position. One assistant superintendent stated, "I'm not quite sure all principals really want this when they begin to realize what this involves, because all of a sudden, it's going to mean accountability, much more accountability" (December, 1990). Westside's principal expressed his view towards the accountability issue: "I'm the principal of the school, and . . . when something happens here, the superintendent and the Board don't go to the Leadership Council; they go to Tom Morrow" (October, 1990).

The principal as a middle manager is confronted with the same dilemmas of accountability traditionally associated with the role. However, the new decision-making structures in Bridgewater clearly raise the stakes and heighten the tension felt by the principals as they seek to learn "on the fly". In time, the principals may find more efficient ways to adapt this role to the new structure in Bridgewater, but we see no evidence to suggest that this role will be reduced. This is reflected both in their own sense of what must be accomplished in the day-to-day running of the schools, as well as in the district's policy guidelines that refer to the principal as the administrative head of the school.

The Principal as Instructional Leader

In 1979, Ron Edmonds published a seminal article in which he stated unequivocally that *strong administrative leadership* was a characteristic of instructionally effective schools. This watershed conclusion gave impetus to calls for principals to engage more actively in leading the school's instructional program and in focusing staff attention on student outcomes. When combined with the implementation findings of the 1970's, this research suggested a central role for principals in educational improvement (Fullan, 1991).

Subsequently, researchers and staff developers elaborated on Edmond's conclusion in attempts to describe what it meant to exercise instructional leadership. By the mid-1980s, inservice efforts aimed at developing the instructional leadership of principals were increasingly common (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). School administrators were deluged with a "new orthodoxy" that reflected an effective schools perspective on leadership (Wimpelberg, 1990). Though components of this instructional leadership role varied from state to state, the general model reflected Edmond's belief that the principal must provide strong instructional leadership if a school is to make tough decisions in the best interests of children. Implicit in this model is the notion that the principal must assume active leadership in development of the school's educational program.

One postulate of shared decision-making is that involving teachers in core technology decisions abates the need for the principal to serve this central role as the school's instructional leader (Carnegie Commission, 1986). Consistent with this perspective, Bridgewater's restructuring policies require principals to involve more and different groups of people in educational decision-making. In theory, a larger set of educational decisions would also be placed in the hands of school-based personnel. Instructional leadership responsibilities would be diffused among the principal, assistant principal, a curriculum theme facilitator at each site, teachers and, to some degree, parents. At the same time, the superintendent's vision is that principals will remain actively involved in providing instructional leadership. As noted earlier, this has created considerable ambiguity in practice.

From the onset of these reforms, the Bridgewater principals were adamant about maintaining a central role as instructional leaders. For example, Jack Cameron recalled:

> We're [principals] concerned that he [superintendent] didn't state that the

> principal is the educational leader of the school. We don't want to give up that title. I think he's a little shocked about our reaction today, but we don't want to be known as managers. We still want to be educational leaders. (September, 1989)

According to one teacher on a SLC, the desire of the principals to serve as instructional leaders is a positive one. She argued that in order for restructuring to crack the classroom door, "One of two things has to happen from my little bit of knowledge about school instruction. One is that you have to have a strong instructional leader who clearly interprets and enforces the vision, and/or you have to have strong basic teachers who are willing and able to rise above it" (March, 1991). While this did not necessarily reflect a consensus view among teachers, it suggests that there was still a tendency to look towards the principals for instructional leadership.

At the same time, the principals also recounted a familiar litany of factors that impeded them from carrying out the instructional leadership role.

> I'm more concerned about the instructional issues and how we can improve what we're doing. . . because the bottom line of restructuring to me is that I want to get rid of the junk that's holding me back from doing my job. . . which is working with the teachers in the classroom. (Peter O'Hara; September, 1990)

> If I had my druthers, I'd much rather have had a facilitator to do my job so that I could get involved in the curriculum issues, but . . . it just becomes a very difficult process with everything that goes on in a building. (Tom Morrow; February, 1990)

This observation of Tom Morrow's is familiar in the educational leadership literature (Cuban, 1988; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The startling normative impact of the school effectiveness literature on educational leadership was based in large part on the gap between current descriptions of principal leadership and the findings in instructionally effective schools. Some observers have noted that school restructuring might finally result in the instructional leadership needed by schools, but too seldom provided despite the best intentions of principals.

Despite the contention that School Leadership Councils represent new sources of instructional leadership, the evidence from this case study indicates this has not been the case at Eastside or Westside. Three instructional leadership tasks proved difficult for council members to perform: focussing on academic issues, viewing the school from a "global" perspective, and obtaining new information for decision-making.

At Eastside, the Leadership Council chairperson noted that it took two years before the council even began to address "educational topics" in their meetings. "Our focus, judging from a review of School Leadership Council minutes of the past two years, showed that we were so confused in our new sense of power in shared decision-making, that we might have talked about the plumbing, you know. . . everything but education" (December, 1991). The principals tried to focus the council's attention on programs affecting kids by ensuring that these topics dominated the agenda, providing readings on various educational programs, and framing each topic in terms of its potential to exert an influence on children. However, they were often unsuccessful in maintaining the SLC's focus on the educational program. Sometimes they lost this focus themselves; at other times, they felt constrained by their new role and were reluctant to intervene in shaping the Council's proceedings.

At Westside, after four years of implementation, the Leadership Council has still been unable and/or unwilling to grapple with serious educational decisions. One teacher on the

Leadership Council at Westside attributed the inability to deal at a deep level with educational policy to ineffective leadership from the principal by exclaiming:

> Tom is a lovely man. He's kind, considerate, caring, and loves to nurture kids, and he never says no to me. . . I just don't think of his role as being an instructional leader. I think he would like to be, but he doesn't know how to go about doing it. I just don't think he is intellectually driven. (March, 1991)

The transience of SLC members seems to exacerbate the inclination of staff and parents to focus on short-term issues. With new members joining relatively small decision-making bodies each year, momentum and focus are difficult to sustain. Teachers tend not to serve long enough to obtain the broader view of the school's educational problems. Parents come to the table with their own concerns which are often unrelated to the instructional program. As one Westside teacher observed:

> So what happens is all the eyes will be in the center of the table; the [parents'] side will flow constantly to the principal. Unless the situation makes the person, my suspicion is that these are not people who think particularly independently or have a vested interest in the classroom. They have a very myopic view. . . . There are a couple of fine parents who have pride, but again their vision is limited and they tend to be deferential. (March, 1991)

Peter O'Hara painted a picture of a similar problem at Eastside. He described how this creates a potential dilemma for the principal.

> At some point it's the role of the principal as instructional leader to say, 'well, I think your decision is shortsighted or inappropriate or detrimental to the school. . . I may find myself in a situation where . . . I'm going to make an executive decision. And will that undermine or diminish the perception of the Leadership

> Council as influencing decision-making in the school? I don't think it does. But I think most people feel that it might because, well, 'You didn't listen to us, therefore, we didn't make it; we didn't share this.' (March, 1992)

Although parents and especially teachers have a lot of information to base their decisions upon, they also lack a great deal of information necessary to make the most informed decisions. During four years of implementation, the Leadership Council at Westside failed to seek additional information to inform a single decision, while the Leadership Council at Eastside collected new information on only one occasion. On that occasion, O'Hara had given the council members the authority to decide whether or not to implement a Reading Recovery program. O'Hara was clear from the beginning that he supported the program. In fact, he was such an advocate that several council members, including the chairperson, thought he was being manipulative, and "it seemed like it [participation in Reading Recovery] had been agreed upon between the principal and one of the pre-K people in the district; and then, he was asking us to vote on whether we thought it was wise or not, and it seemed like an after the fact." (December, 1991)

O' Hara acknowledged that it was not clear in the beginning how the decision was ultimately going to be made, but it was clear:

> ...that the Leadership Council had been put into [the decision] whether or not we did the program, and in the course of these several discussions what finally happened was they [council members] said, 'well, how are we going to deal with this? ... Are you going to ask us for advice or are we going to be involved in the decision?' I said, 'you are.' (May, 1992)

After having their role confirmed, the Leadership Council gathered extensive information on the program, including test results on children who had participated in it. According to O'Hara, if the council had remained in an advisory capacity, this additional information would not have been collected. Moreover, he proclaimed, "the passion wouldn't have been seen either. It would have been --'well, he's going to do it anyway.' ... Nor would it have been shared in as wide spread a fashion as it was." (May, 1992)

Although this outcome was positive, three years passed before the council at Eastside sought the additional information. Moreover, their motivation to do so appears to have occurred only to avoid feeling as if they were being manipulated into *making* a decision that had already been *made*. It appears they sought new information for the first time in this case only to justify their position because they knew they were challenging the principal's values.

In summary, we found a persisting belief and desire among the three principals that they retain the role of instructional leader, though this meant different things to different people. The enactment of this role was, however, constrained by all of the traditional limitations faced by principals who would be instructional leaders -- time, expertise, cooperation from teachers, district support, authority (Murphy, Hallinger, Miller, & Lotto, 1987). Moreover, new policies embedded in the district's reorganization imposed real constraints on their ability to carry out that role if they so desired.

It is interesting to note that the superintendent's attributions of a school's success or failure with respect to restructuring are frequently attributed to the degree of instructional and curricular leadership provided by the principal. Yet, ambiguity with respect to how instructional leadership will be provided continues to hinder progress towards the district's

educational goals. If instructional leadership is not to be provided in the manner recommended in the literature (i.e., by the principal), where will it come from?

The Principal as Transformational Leader

Whereas earlier effectiveness-based conceptions of teaching sought to specify the optimal instructional behaviors of teachers, recent researchers in teaching emphasize a more dynamic process of teacher decision-making. Smylie and Conyers capture this perspective:

> [Teaching is] a complex, dynamic, interactive, intellectual activity, not as a string of routinized tasks. . . . If teachers are to meet the rapidly changing needs of their students, their practice cannot be prescribed or standardized (Devaney & Sykes, 1988). Teachers will require substantial autonomy to make appropriate instructional decisions. These decisions go beyond selecting from an array of previously mastered routines. They include crafting idiosyncratic strategies to achieve classroom, school, and district goals. (1991, p. 13)

This conception of teaching has implications for the manner in which schools are organized and administered. A goal of school restructuring is to reshape the school organization in order to better identify and meet local needs (Elmore, 1990; Murphy, 1991). The school is viewed as the unit responsible for the initiation of change, not just the implementation of changes conceived by others (Barth, 1992). Teachers are viewed as sources of expertise, rather than as implementors of others' plans for school improvement. By implication, school leadership expands to include teachers (and parents) as well as the principal.

This highlights a different role for principals (as well as for parents and teachers) in problem-finding and problem-solving. This is increasingly referred to as "transformational leadership." While the instructional leadership imagery of the 1980s highlighted the centrality of the principal's role in coordinating and controlling curriculum and instruction, school restructuring

emphasizes the diffuse nature of school leadership. Leithwood and his colleagues capture this distinction by referring to the instructional leader as "leading from the front or the middle of the band" and the transformational leader as "leading from the back of the band" (1992, p. 6). They suggest that:

> [A]n emphasis [on instructional leadership] was wholly appropriate and timely to bring to school leadership in the early 1980's when the term gained a widespread following. But "instructional leadership" conveys a meaning which encompasses only a portion of those activities now associated with effective school leadership. (p. 10)

As Sergiovanni has noted, *"Instructional leader* suggests that others have got to be followers. The legitimate instructional leaders, if we have to have them, ought to be teachers. And principals ought to be leaders of leaders: people who develop the instructional leadership in their teachers" (Brandt, 1992, 45).

For principals who have thought of themselves as managers or instructional leaders, the movement towards transformational leadership involves a very different way of thinking about the role of the principal as well as different role behaviors. The data collected in Bridgewater over the past four years suggests that such shifts are not made easily. Where these implicit beliefs about leadership conflict with those held by the principal, the difficulties in bringing about change are considerable.

Jack Cameron, the principal of Eastside during the first year of implementation, highlights the importance of a fit between the leadership style of the principal and the decision-making context. By his own attribution, Cameron facetiously compared his leadership style of the past 23 years to that of "Attila the Hun". This reflected his highly directive role as the school's decision-maker, consulting teachers when and how he saw fit. He claimed that the district's

reforms had compelled him to become "more like Mary had a little lamb" (September, 1989). These antithetical metaphors for his leadership styles reflect the sweeping changes in role expectations perceived by Cameron as a result of shared decision-making mandate. As stated earlier, the new role adjustments were so difficult that they contributed to his decision to retire following the initial year of implementation.

While Cameron accepted the inevitability of the new role constraints, he never became comfortable with them and questioned an assumption underlying this reform.

> I'm not fully convinced that all teachers want to take this on. I'm not fully convinced that the staff wants to become totally involved. I think a lot of teachers just say, leave me alone and let me do my job. I don't want to be on a committee. I sense that a lot of teachers do not want leadership. They want to be led. (September, 1989)

The inability of this principal to alter his leadership style supports the adage, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." It also highlights the importance of personal values in the exercise of educational leadership and suggests that selection is at least as important as training when thinking about leaders for restructured schools. While this scenario was almost predictable, the difficulty experienced by the other principals in assuming a transformational leadership role was more surprising. Although both Peter O'Hara and Tom Morrow clearly espoused the values inherent in school restructuring, each has had problems finding a leadership role that fits the mandates of district policy and the needs of their school.

Peter O'Hara, Jack Cameron's successor, has been more comfortable operating under the newly sanctioned mode of shared decision-making. He came from a school that had operated under a similar set of assumptions, though without the same district policy framework.

> I envision schools where the principal of the school is not the chief reigning officer, per se, in the old traditional role, but a person who serves as a resource, a guide, a facilitator, where it really should have been in the first place, and you have a school where there is peer coaching and peer evaluation and so on going on. (November, 1990)

Given his personal values, it has required a comparatively minor philosophical adjustment for him in Bridgewater. In fact, his personal values and prior experience were deciding factors in his selection as principal at Eastside. Yet, he has had considerable trouble marshalling the support of his staff in moving in the direction suggested by the district's reforms.

At Eastside, while many stakeholders, including the principal, viewed the pace of change as too slow, an equally sized constituency believed they were moving too quickly. When queried about this dilemma, O'Hara elaborated on an inherent tension:

> That's [when to move ahead] an almost daily decision that you have to make because you have to serve as both a catalyst and a facilitator, and those are almost contradictory roles. A facilitator is a person who tries to get everybody to move at a pace that people can handle and come to some kind of a consensus. At the same time, you like to put a little fire under them and move a little faster. What I've found I have had to do is be two or three steps ahead of them, but realize that I'm two or three steps ahead. I had the Leadership Council chairperson once say to me, 'We're all going in the same direction, but you're on the express lane." (January, 1993)

Although he wanted to quicken the pace with which innovations were adopted at Eastside, he was wary that if he attempted to do so, it might be at the expense of no longer being perceived by his staff as a facilitative leader. In fact, he has had a number of conflicts with staff

over both the process and content of decisions made by the SLC. To date the SLC as a source of leadership remains a tenuous body. For the past two years, the school has had difficulty recruiting teachers to run for the council. After three years of implementation, O'Hara observed:

> I don't think they [teachers] view it [Leadership Council] yet as a necessary way of running the school. I still occasionally get from a variety of people the statement that, 'you just tell us what to do and we'll go along because you have the ideas and you see what's going on globally. We'll give you feedback as to what's happening and so on.' (May, 1992)

We infer that the teachers' own cost-benefit analysis finds that the considerable commitment of time put into the SLC is not worth the it given the degree of perceived impact that the Council has had. A teacher on Westside's council directly stated, "I think one [obstacle] is that they [teachers] don't see the connection between what the Leadership Council does and how it has an impact on the school or their lives." (March, 1991) O'Hara, Eastside's current principal, described the problem similarly, "People don't see the products coming out that they felt they would see, and that's caused people to become disenchanted with what's going on." (April, 1993)

The fact that the SLC have been viewed as an elitist group has served as an additional obstacle to teacher commitment. When asked about the staff's response to the Leadership Council, the chair at Eastside bluntly stated, "I think it's been wary." (December, 1990) O'Hara noted, "It's almost a stigma but not quite a stigma of being on the council." (April, 1993) The climate at Westside was comparable. One teacher on the council described wonderfully the force maintaining all teachers on an equal level.

> And what I've come to understand--I mean I've always read it and now I see it, and that is that the group exercises a kind of *cosmostatus*. I mean you had better be just like everybody else and if you tend to become different, the group will exert some kind of pressure to pull you back into the group, and that's kind of what's happening right now. (March, 1991)

Four years into the implementation of the district's restructuring, Peter O'Hara has retained his enthusiasm, despite the erosion of support and dwindling commitment of teachers. Simultaneously, he has been isolated from the central office, in part, as a result of supporting teachers in a number situations in which the SLC's decisions were overturned by the central office.

Tom Morrow, the principal at Westside, also espouses a facilitative leadership style consistent with shared decision-making. When asked during the initial stages of implementation to describe his orientation, he replied:

> Well, my style is a style basically of school-based management. . . I usually do not dictate programs or ideas on people. I ask for participation, so we do a lot of collective discussions and thinking about what should happen . . . Sometimes, it takes us a little longer than other schools, but I think we're doing it with the right approach and the right process. (November, 1989)

Four years later, Morrow has been worn down and frustrated by the demands of the restructuring initiative. His school has also achieved only limited success in expanding the leadership roles within the staff. In this case, different educational philosophies of the principal and the school's theme facilitator have limited the effectiveness of their collaboration.

In summary, the new context created for school leadership by the district's restructuring has resulted in overwhelming ambiguity with respect to role and responsibilities. Despite the

creation of new roles and decision-making structures, there is little evidence to suggest that the occupants of those roles have found satisfactory ways to share leadership responsibilities. This has been the case even where the principals' personal values are congruent with the precepts of shared decision-making and school-based management.

Conclusion

> [Transformational change] is catalyzed by a change in the belief and awareness about what is possible and necessary for the organization. . . . It is something akin to letting go of the trapeze in mid-air before a new one swings into view. . . Unlike transitional change, the new state is usually unknown until it begins to take shape. . . . Most of the variables are not going to be controlled, rushed, or short-circuited. (Ackerman, 1986, p. 2)

Researchers, policymakers and practitioners alike have been quick to envision a range of possible new roles for school principals as schools have begun to restructure. These prescriptions have ranged from a retreat into the traditional managerial support role, a full embrace of the instructional leadership role that emerged during the 1980's, to an evolution into the role of transformational leader (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992). Although the importance of the principal to the success of school restructuring is often asserted, there is no consensus among practitioners, researchers or policymakers as to the appropriate role of the principal in a restructured school.

In the terms used by Ackerman, the change in principal role envisioned during the 1980's -- from managerial to instructional leader -- was transitional in nature. Principals were exhorted to shift more of their attention to the instructional arena. Although the shift towards instructional leadership added new responsibilities, it did not represent a qualitative change in the way that principals did business.The principal's preeminence as the school's decision-maker

remained unquestioned. In fact, if a principal assumed the mantle of instructional leader, status as the school's key decision-maker was further enhanced.

We emphasize the conditional and incremental nature of this change because the forces that pressed principals to take on the instructional leadership role were primarily normative in nature. Even as research reports, articles in professional journals and staff development programs heralded the importance of this role for the school principal (Wimpelberg, 1990), there was surprisingly little change in the local conditions that would support the practice, as opposed to the rhetoric, of instructional leadership (Eckholm, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Marsh, 1992). Thus, the shift towards assumption of a stronger instructional leadership role remained, for most principals, discretionary. There were few incentives and minimal support for principals who would become instructional leaders. Moreover, there were seldom formal sanctions or normative penalties for principals who failed to take on additional instructional leadership responsibilities.

In contrast, the data from this longitudinal study of a restructuring school district suggest a qualitative change in the requirements for leadership at the school level. The attempt to shift more educational decisions from the central office to the school, while not yet successfully implemented in this district, raises the stakes in the decision-making process. The implementation of shared decision-making further raises the stakes associated with school level decision-making by making the decisions more visible and public. The structural changes increase the potential for conflict since the principal must now negotiate higher stakes decisions with staff and parents, while remaining accountable to the central office.

These changes in the district context bring forces to bear on the principalship that not only add new responsibilities, but also change the conduct of traditional role activities. Thus, we found important changes in the manner in which principals are being asked to perform both

their managerial and instructional leadership roles. Even traditional roles such as facility management now entail working through the School Leadership Council to make what were once unilateral decisions. Responsibility for instructional leadership is now shared with a group of teachers and parents as well as with a curriculum facilitator.

Ackerman's (1986) observation that, "Unlike transitional change, the new [role] state is usually unknown until it begins to take shape," aptly describes the context for leadership in Bridgewater (p. 2). The role change required of principals -- and other staff -- in Bridgewater is indeed transformational in nature. Moreover, unlike the shift towards instructional leadership during the 1980's, these changes in the role are not discretionary. The structural, highly visible nature of the reform continuously presses principals to behave differently, though the appropriate role behavior is often difficult to discern.

In our judgment, the principals examined in this study have, for the most part, been unable to successfully adapt to the new demands of the district context. One of the principals, Jack Cameron, retired after the first year of implementation. Although this was due to a variety of factors, the nature of the new initiative and lack of congruence with his former style of leadership appeared paramount. A second principal (Tom Morrow) has left his position after four years of implementation, worn down and frustrated by the demands of operating under school-based management and shared decision-making. After three years, Peter O'Hara, though still supportive of the concept, has been unsuccessful in finding a style that meets both the expectations of the central office and the needs of his staff. His future in the district is in question.

The experiences of these three principal raises the question as to why they have been unable to adapt to the new context. Several issues seem pertinent to understanding in this regard. First, it would seem that the new reforms require a set of personal values concerning

leadership that are consistent with the intent of the restructuring initiative. Jack Cameron, a veteran principal imbued with a certain belief about the role of the principal, did not accept the assumptions that underlie school restructuring and was, therefore, uncomfortable in the new leadership role demanded under the new organizational structure. However, a congruence in personal beliefs and values concerning the leader's role in a restructured setting is, by itself, insufficient.

The new context requires also a set of group process skills that enable the principal to work effectively with a diverse group of people. As noted above, one of the most striking features of the data collected in these schools is the amount of time the principals now spend in group decision-making forums. The principal's comfort with this approach must be combined with tools that enable others to contribute in making better educational decisions. The transient nature of other SLC members' participation makes the principal's role particularly important, even though in this district the principals do not chair the councils. This is not a domain which principals have either had role models or formal preparation.

The literature on transformational leadership would suggest that school restructuring will have the effect of tapping the instructional expertise of other school leaders and potentially reducing the principal's responsibilities in this domain. Our data suggest that instructional leadership remains an important area of principal responsibility, though the manner in which the role is enacted changes quite dramatically. The principals still needed to play key functions in helping their councils maintain a focus on educational issues, linking them to outside resources, and pushing them to take a broad view of the school. These are functions that individual teacher and parent members of the councils seemed unable to perform on a consistent basis. Not all of the principals had the expertise to perform this role.

Finally, the degree to which the principals have been able to adapt to the necessary transformation in their role must be related to the persisting lack of clarity in the lines of authority and domains of responsibility within the system. This was particularly acute with respect to accountability for decision-making. Conflicting expectations for how principals will lead their schools also emerged from teachers, formal role descriptions, and the comments of central office administrators. This reflects the maze of formal structural obstacles (e.g., district and state policies and regulations) and informal norms (e.g., reluctance to let go of traditional roles) that impede transformational change.

In this chapter, we have described how the context for school leadership changes in a district that engages in the process of school restructuring. In the Bridgewater Public Schools, the district's restructuring initiative has indeed placed a very different set of demands on the school principals. Successful adaptation to this context requires a personal transformation in the way that principals think and act. We expect that many principals will have difficulty making this adaptation, not only because of personal factors, but also because of the level of ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in organizations during periods of transformational change.

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